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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [BP](#)  
SUBJECT: SOLOMON ISLANDS - RIOT, ARSON, NOW MURDER

REF: PORT MORESBY 338

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Fitts, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy Port  
Moresby, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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1.(C) Summary: Prosecutors have laid charges against four politicians of plotting the April riots and in addition planning to murder four political rivals. The case rests on testimony of several witnesses and authorities remain concerned that pressure may be brought against families to get them to withdraw their testimony. Despite the dramatic and widely reported charges, there are no signs as yet that the Prime Minister Sogavare will abandon his effort to spring his associates from jail and label the charges as political. End Summary

#### The Usual Suspects

2.(SBU) On August 28, SIG prosecutors revealed in court that they will charge Charles Dausebea, Alex Bartlett, Nelson Ne'e, and David Dausebea with plotting the April riots and planning to kill former PM Kemakeza, then-PM Snyder Rini, former Finance Minister Peter Boyers and former Foreign Minister Laurie Chan. The charges are based on testimony from witnesses at a motel meeting where the four were present. The immediate case was to deny bail to Bartlett, who was out on bail over other charges. Bartlett was Foreign Minister in 2002 in the previous Sogavare government. He was denied entry to the US based on his role in earlier ethnic violence. His lawyers pleaded ill health (diabetes, from which many Solomon Island politicians suffer, particularly when facing charges.) Bail was denied. Charles Dausebea was also a leader of the earlier violence and also excluded from the US.

#### Witness Protection

3.(C) Though the prosecutors cited only one witness, we understand from the Police Commissioner that there are several others. However, the Commissioner expressed real concern that Charles Dausebea would reach out from his jail cell and pressure the witnesses through their families. Though the witnesses were under protection, they each had extended families and Dausebea has a reputation of operating with a heavy hand. Without the testimony, the Commissioner doubted the government could prove its case.

#### All The PM's Friends

4.(C) Charles Dausebea and Ne'e were named ministers in the current government and Dausebea is popularly believed to be the real power behind Sogavare. Bartlett remains an associate. Per

reftel, Sogavare has seemed bent on springing Dausebea and labeling the charges against him as political. Though he has told other Melanesian leaders (PNG's Rabbie Namaliu and Vanuatu's Sato Kilman - please protect) that he was merely trying to placate Dausebea's followers, his determined efforts belie that line. Since the news of the serious charges hit the press, the PM has made no move to distance himself from the accused.

In the Thick of It

5.(SBU) Testimony in the trial detailed a meeting of the four accused on April 13, five days before the riot. Dausebea allegedly said he intended to burn Chinese businesses which were supporting his political rivals. He specifically directed Ne'e to have his people burn the Pacific Casino, because it was taking business away from Dausebea's Honiara Casino. He also mentioned, to general approval, his plan to have the four rivals killed during the violence. The Pacific Casino was completely destroyed. Rini and Kemakeza were immediately placed under police protection when the riots started and Laurie Chan was at his usual spot (at the bar) in his father's hotel. That hotel was also guarded by police.

6.(C) COMMENT: As presented by the prosecutors, the scenario of careful planning and smooth execution seems a bit too pat for the poorly organized confusion that generally characterizes Solomons politics. Perhaps the police presence frustrated real plans to kill opponents, or perhaps Dausebea was voicing a sentiment rather than a serious plan. More will presumably come out in the trial. There is little doubt however, that Dausebea, Bartlett et al are serious political thugs and that Sogavare is at best misguided in his continued association with them. Sogavare, an outwardly pious Seventh Day Adventist, is likely out of his depth.

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